

Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NEO-MALTHUSIANISM.

BY THE REV. R. F. CLARKE, S.J.

THE doctrines of Malthus respecting the growth of population, and its relation to the simultaneous increase in the means of subsistence, are now very generally discredited. His calculation that the population of a country doubles itself under normal circumstances in a quarter of a century, while the food for its support, instead of in any way keeping pace with it, advances only in accordance with the tardier laws of arithmetical progression, is not borne out by subsequent economists. The single precept which was the practical result of his investigations, "Abstain from marriage until you have sufficient means to support your family in comfort," is justly considered to introduce evils far worse than those which it was intended to remedy. It would have an injurious effect on the general morality and would tend to the degradation of a larger proportion of the female population.

But the difficulties arising from the rapid increase of population have not diminished since the days of Malthus. The decay of the warlike spirit, and the ever advancing appreciation of the blessings of peace, have removed, at least for a time, one of the chief agencies tending to keep down the number of human beings on the face of the earth. The improved sanitary condition of all civilized countries has been instrumental in bringing about an almost entire cessation of the fatal epidemics which decimated Europe during the middle ages. The wonderful discoveries of medical science have co-operated in various ways to the preservation of human life. The greater skill and knowledge of the modern leech has saved the lives of thousands who would otherwise have perished long before they had arrived at the term of years allotted to man by the Psalmist, and of tens of

thousands who in former times would never have seen the light, or have faded away in their infancy or early childhood. The death-rate of almost all civilized nations tends continually to become less, and that in spite of the feebler constitutions and earlier signs of decay that are the lot of the present generation.

We, therefore, have still to face the dangers of over-population. The crowding of the most active and enterprising of the country people into the large cities has aggravated the difficulties of the situation. It is true that the discovery of steam has told in the opposite direction. It has increased enormously the facilities for emigration, and has opened to the surplus population of an overcrowded country fields of labor that were quite inaccessible to them before. It has also made easy the transport of all the necessaries of life from the very ends of the earth, and the proletariat of London have a far better supply of cheap provision in the present day than they had half a century ago.

Yet there certainly exists a widely prevalent apprehension that a continuance of the present increase will some day either bring about a catastrophe, or entail a terrible amount of misery and degradation in the more thickly inhabited countries of the world. Men profess to discover, here and there, at least the first commencement of the impending evils; and they urge the adoption of some means, if any such can be found, of checking the rapidity of the increase. Malthusianism has failed, but a new school has arisen to whom we may give the name of "Neo-Malthusians," who while they reject the system proposed by Malthus, substitute for it a corresponding system of their own, which they think will avert the danger by surer and wiser means.

This new school does not desire to defer the period of marriage, as Malthus did. On the contrary, they rather encourage, within reasonable limits, the prevalence of early unions. They advocate the hindrance of a too rapid growth of the population, not by postponing conjugal felicity, but by a voluntary restriction on the part of married persons, of the number of children born to them. They recognize fully the evils attending any artificial bar to wedlock, but deny that the married state necessarily entails an unlimited offspring. They assert that ordinary prudence requires that we should not bring into the world those for whom we have not the means of providing, and they denounce, perhaps sometimes in rather unmeasured language, the

cruelty and wickedness of deliberately disregarding the future well-being of our own flesh and blood, and of producing children who in the ordinary course of things are destined to either absolute or comparative pauperism.

If these reformers simply sought to enforce by their counsels such a separation between husband and wife as would ensure the end they have in view, if after the birth of just such a number of children as they believe they can bring up in their own station, they were henceforward to live as brother and sister, we should not have so much to say against their proposal. We could not approve of it. "Want of intercourse," says the great philosopher of antiquity, "has destroyed many a friendship," and this is more true of the friendship of married persons than of any other. A coldness and distance is apt to spring up between them. The wife ceases to be to her husband the "wife of his bosom." They are no longer of one heart and one soul, and become almost like strangers to each other. There is, moreover, the continual danger that one or other of them will seek a closer friendship elsewhere, and that passion will find unlawful indulgence in some forbidden way. The separation, moreover, is in a large majority of cases impracticable. It is only the upper class whose houses admit of its being effectually carried out. We may, therefore, put it aside as impossible for the masses, and undesirable in all but a few exceptional instances.

But this is not all that the Neo-Malthusians propose. They are no mere theorists, but practical men, bent on spreading their opinions far and wide. They do not ask husband and wife to live apart, but to live on as before, providing only certain preventive checks, which shall effectually put a stop to any further increase in their family, except in so far as they themselves may choose. They not only justify the adoption of such means in their own case, but recommend it to others. Already preventive checks are largely prevalent in France, and to this is in great measure due the stationary numbers of the population. In some parts of America Neo-Malthusianism is said to have made considerable progress, and to have been instrumental in the gradual diminution of many of the old families of the New England States, which stands out in striking contrast to the rapid growth of the immigrant portion of the inhabitants. In England such practises are on the increase, and seem likely

to spread still more rapidly, on account of the zealous propagandism of many of their supporters, and the decay of religious belief among those who are called "orthodox Protestants." If the doctrines of the Neo-Malthusians are unlawful, and injurious to a country, it is full time that those who lament their prevalence should come forward to bear witness against them, and to show how ruinous are the consequences that will be their ultimate result.

Here we have to remember that those with whom we have to argue are not to be influenced by arguments based on religious dogma or on the pronouncements of authority. It is quite useless to tell them that what they advocate is opposed to the law of nature. Many of them do not recognize the existence of any *a priori* natural law, but say that what we know by that name is but a collection of generalizations from experience as to what is and what is not promotive of the general good. If you quote Holy Scripture against them, they will find a ready evasion in the special circumstances of the age, or perhaps will deny the binding character of the inference drawn from the Sacred Text. If you tell them that the means they propose are crimes which call down the anger of God, they will simply smile incredulously. If you appeal to their moral sense, they will assure you that it approves of their proceedings, and that a positive sense of guilt would arise in them if they were guilty of the reckless procreation of children whom they did not see their way to provide for. We must therefore take them on their own ground, and show that all religious and moral considerations apart, the practices they advocate are not only quite unnecessary to the well being of society, but absolutely ruinous to the welfare of mankind, most injurious to morality and productive of the very evils that they are intended to check.

We have then, first of all, to examine into the existence and causes of the evils to be remedied. The widely spread poverty and misery of our large cities, with all the social and moral degradation they entail, constitute, unhappily, a fact that no one can deny. But before we conclude that this is the result of the too rapid increase of the population, we must inquire of those who have the widest experience of the poorer classes, what are in general the causes of destitution among them. If we find that large families and wretched homes are invariably found

together, then the connection between the number of children and the ensuing misery or semi-starvation would be clearly established. Or if, again, those cities and districts where the numbers have increased the most rapidly, and where the inhabitants are most closely packed, are those which witness the greatest amount of suffering from extreme poverty, this, too, would indicate a connection of cause and effect between rapid growth and dense population on the one hand, and depressed economic conditions on the other. This is a matter in which we must look not to what the theorist tells us *must be* the case, but to what an examination of the facts tells us *is* the case.

I believe the experience of everyone who lives and has lived among the poor, whether it be Catholic priest or Protestant clergyman, Sister of Charity or district visitor, charity organization agent or Brother of St. Vincent de Paul, will bear me out in my conviction that nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine-hundredths, of the actual destitution among the poor is to be traced, directly or indirectly, to habits of drink. It is not, as a general rule, the drunkard himself who has to pay the heaviest penalty, at least in this world, for his intemperance. It is too often the helpless wife and the neglected children who have to bear the burden of their father's sin. There is scarcely a city or a town in the whole world from which all abject poverty would not practically disappear if the vice of drunkenness could be banished. Of course there are, besides, a number of instances of destitution in no way connected with drink. The sudden death or long illness of the breadwinner of the family will, from time to time, cause a very acute phase of misery and want. The poor helpless mother, with her hungry brood, is as sad a sight as well can be. But such cases are exceptional, and men do not legislate for exceptions. Such needs can easily be met, and are met in every well organized community, by Christian charity. They are also of their very nature only temporary. Even the poor widow left destitute with half a dozen little ones, if she is at all deserving, is sure to find friends and obtain employment. The pinch of poverty may be severe for a time, but in our complex civilization there is work for all who have willing hands and an honest heart. Add to this that the advance of habits of thrift, the increased facilities for insurance, and the growing sense of the duty of pro-

viding for such contingencies, make the occurrence of acute cases of unforeseen distress tend continually to diminish.

There is another point that is worth considering. Does a large family tend in the long run to greater poverty? It may for the first few years after marriage. But this is not, as a rule, the time when the pinch is felt. Both father and mother are in the prime of their health and strength, and the difficulty of finding sufficient means of support is, in the case of the industrious and sober, exceedingly rare. It is usually in later life that the pinch comes, if it comes at all. It is when middle age, or a life of hard labor, or some unforeseen sickness or accident, brings with it a lessened energy, and the need of more generous living. It is when the hair begins to grow gray, and the once upright form is bowed by advancing years, that hunger and poverty are most to be dreaded.

At this later stage of the career of the bread-winner of the family is the presence of a copious brood most often a help or a hindrance? I think that most of those who have had a practical experience of the life of the poor in our large towns and cities will agree with me that the contributions of the children, as time goes on, are in a large majority of instances a very material assistance to the comfort of its older members. When the big boys and girls are able to work in the shops or in the mills, the family income tends steadily to increase, within certain limits, with the increasing offspring. We often find families whose combined income is so large that they are able to enjoy not only all the necessaries, but also the comforts of life, and to form, besides, a little reserve fund if they are thrifty. Such families would be reckoned by tens of thousands in the large towns, both in America and England, if it were not that in too many cases the public-house, instead of the savings bank, is the inheritor of their surplus earnings, and robs them of all the comforts and a portion of the very necessities of life. But if the parents are temperate, and bring up their children well, the increasing numbers will, after a certain period, mean increasing resources just at the time when father and mother are beginning to be less able to fight their way amid the difficulties of life, and in the presence, it may be, of bodily infirmities.

This consideration is of still more telling force when old age overtakes the father and mother, and they look for some means

of support in their declining years other than that provided by the cruel, comfortless shelter of the poor-house. It is easy to say that, with a limited family, they will have had opportunity of laying up some provision for the years when they can work no longer. This is beautiful in theory; but every practical man knows that, in point of fact, the number of the poor who can be induced to save is still comparatively small. Unless the state renders some insurance with a view to old age compulsory (and to this there are many objections), nine-tenths of the poor will be found, when their powers fail, without any pecuniary support for the concluding years of life. When this time shall arrive, they must look for help to one or other of their children. Their chance of being maintained in comfort will depend on their having one or more of their offspring able and willing to support them. In these circumstances, it stands to reason that the advantage will on the whole be distinctly on the side of those who have a numerous progeny. If a man has half a dozen children, there is a far better chance of one of them being the stay of his old age than if he has only two or three. The Neo-Malthusians would perhaps answer that the two or three would on their system be far better off than the members of the larger family of those who reject their teaching. Even if this were so, (and we are not sure that there would be much difference, or that the paucity of their numbers would be compensated by their superior resources), we fear that the principle of selfishness that underlies the Neo-Malthusian doctrines would not tend to any self-sacrifice on the part of the children for their parents' sake. But when an aged couple have some half-dozen sons and daughters, some at home and some abroad, some, it may be, married, and some still single, experience teaches us that in a majority of cases, there are found some one or more who count it a privilege to help their parents from far or near.

There is also another fallacy underlying the doctrines of the Neo-Malthusians. When they speak of the iniquity of bringing into the world children whom you have no reasonable prospect of supporting, they are using language which is applicable at most only to the poorest class in the community. Even among them, if the opinions I have expressed above are correct, the chance of bringing into the world little ones to starve is practically limited to those who, through their intemperance or sloth, themselves

create the very evil which these new doctrines pretend to meet. Was there ever, or, at all events, is there to be found now in any city on the face of the earth, any considerable number of individuals who, without any fault of their own, are unable to provide a sufficiency of food for their little ones? Putting aside certain accidental and transitory circumstances, the half-starved children have almost invariably a drunken, or else a hopelessly idle, father or mother. Surely it is not for these that the Neo-Malthusian would legislate. He knows well enough that the same causes that robbed the children of their bread would render nugatory any check on the numbers of their offspring, and that his sage advice will only take effect on those who are well able to supply to their families at least all the necessaries of life. Or if he answer that what he has in view is not so much to preclude the birth of children literally in danger of starvation, as to give to the offspring of a rather higher class a better start in life, and the opportunity of a more thorough education, he in no way improves his position. The danger of the present day does not lie in the direction of a neglect of the education of the children of parents of the artisan and the lower middle classes. More education is one of the panaceas of the modern reformer, and we have no cause to think that he will diminish in his zeal as time goes on. If, however, our Neo-Malthusian friends go further, and declare that it is the duty of every parent to make some pecuniary provision for his children, we do not believe that such a duty will ever be recognized by the common sense of mankind, or indeed that under ordinary circumstances it exists at all. How many have been ruined by the fact that they have never been compelled to rely on their own resources, and that they have had their path in life made smooth for them just at the time when the wholesome necessity of immediate exertion would have trained them to habits of industry for a lifetime?

I have said that in our complex civilization there is work for all who have willing hands and an honest heart. This proposition is one that will perhaps be disputed. We have heard a great deal of late of the "submerged tenth," and of the starving crowds who would fain work if there were work to do. This is a matter in which every man must speak from his own experience. After a life spent for the most part in London and other cities of England, where the labor market is supposed to be overglutted, I

must confess that I do not believe that this is really the case. I am convinced that even in London there is room for every one. A man or woman who is not utterly incapable, or so hopelessly demoralized as to be unable to persevere in any sort of continuous occupation, need scarcely ever remain long unemployed. In the manufacturing towns of the north of England and of Scotland, there is often more work to be done than there are hands to do it. The children are set to work as half-timers as soon as the law permits of their employment, and the abundance of work is a temptation to parents to send their children to the mills when they ought to be at school. A family where there are a number of big boys and girls can earn a collective income that would keep them not only in comfort, but in luxury, if it were not for the curse of drink. Any one who knows the inner life of Manchester, St. Helens, Dundee, Glasgow, and many similar towns will tell you that there is plenty of money going in all of them, and that the poverty, hunger, dirt, disease, the ragged children, overcrowded houses, beggars in the streets, paupers in the workhouse, are to be traced, not to overpopulation, but (allowing for exceptional cases, such as we have noted above) almost invariably to drink. One of the most wonderful achievements of modern enterprise is the extraordinary cheapness of all the necessaries of life in the large cities of Great Britain. Bread, meat, vegetables, fruit, teas, sugar, butter (or its substitutes) are brought in abundance from the very ends of the earth, and are mostly far lower in price than when the numbers to be supplied with food were far less than they are now. While the rate of wages has steadily advanced; while the struggles between employers and employed has, in a large majority of instances, terminated in favor of the latter; all that is absolutely necessary for the physical well-being of the employed has, with the exception of house rent, come more within the reach of all than it ever was before. I speak, indeed, with some hesitation respecting the change that has taken place in American cities in this respect, because my knowledge of them is merely that of a passing visitor; but this at least I think I am safe in asserting, that in spite of the recent depression of trade, and the hardships it has entailed in many cities on the working class, the material advantages of European cities are far more plentiful across the Atlantic, that the wage rate is higher, the necessaries of life cheaper, and the facilities

for finding employment far greater in Cincinnati, Pittsburg, Chicago, or even in New York itself, than they are in Glasgow, Manchester or London. If there is overpopulation anywhere, it is in Europe, not in America; if there are countries that are overcrowded, they are the countries of the Old World, not of the New.

What do we mean by overpopulation? I imagine that we mean that the number of inhabitants on every square mile is greater than what the country can support. If we examine the statistics of European population we find that the most crowded of European countries is Belgium. The average of inhabitants throughout the country is in Belgium 461 to the square mile, whereas it is in England and Wales 389, in France 181, and in Germany 205. If, therefore, overpopulation produces misery and want we ought to find in Belgium a maximum amount of these evils.

So far from this being the case, Belgium is one of the most happy, contented, and prosperous countries in the world. On the other hand, Ireland, which has lost half of its inhabitants in the course of the last fifty years, is the country where extreme poverty and destitution prevails, to an extent unknown elsewhere. It is true that the circumstances of Ireland are exceptional, but at least that country furnishes an answer to those who would have us believe that it is overcrowding which is at the root of all widely prevalent destitution, and that if we can only prevent a too rapid growth of mouths there will be more meat to put into them. The fact is that the facilities of transport are in the present day so enormously increased, that any labor market that happens to be overstocked soon pours its surplus into another that is not so well provided with hands to work it. The transfer may not be possible in a day or a week. Meanwhile, there may be a considerable amount of temporary distress. But the evil will soon remedy itself. President Walker, in a recent article, complains bitterly of the ever-increasing opportunities that are afforded to those who cannot find suitable employment in Europe for seeking a fresh home across the Atlantic! "The organization," he says, "of the European railway and steamship service is now such as to reduce almost to a minimum the energy, courage, intelligence, and pecuniary means required for immigration; a result which is tending to bring us no longer the

more alert and enterprising members of their respective communities, but rather the unlucky, the thriftless, the worthless." The bold proposal of General Booth to found a self-supporting colony beyond the sea, whither are to be gathered the surplus of the home population, the assisted passages to Australia and the Cape, and the rapid opening out of Africa, point to fresh fields for those who fail of a sufficiency of employment, or of an employment sufficiently remunerative to satisfy them, at home.

We must also bear in mind that almost every country in the world is becoming capable, year by year, of accommodating a larger number of inhabitants. Improved methods of agriculture, the utilization of sewage, the cultivation, and the profitable cultivation, of large tracts of land that were before considered hopeless, the draining of marshes, and the reclamation of land from the sea and from inland lakes, the possibility of obtaining a profit from the most sandy and unpromising soil, all enable mankind to be closer packed than formerly without fear of want. There is no reason to suppose that we have come to the end of these improvements, and if men threaten us with the terror of a population which multiplies faster than the means of subsistence can be multiplied, we answer by denying the supposed disproportion in the rate of increase, by reason not only of the ever improving productiveness of the soil, but also on account of the larger area under cultivation at home, to say nothing of the stream of cheap food that is continually flowing into our ports from abroad.

There is, however, a far more serious objection to the preventive checks proposed by the Neo-Malthusians. For they are not only unnecessary, but they would soon bring about a social degradation far more injurious than the exaggerated and somewhat imaginary dangers of overpopulation. I am not speaking now of evils which are regarded as such from a Christian point of view, but I allude simply to social and moral evils that would be considered such even by one who did not believe in a God or a future life. For the proposal of this new school is the adoption of some means which, without enforcing any sort of separation between husband and wife, would effectually prevent the birth of any more children, as soon as the parents decided that they had enough. The adoption of these preventive checks are regarded by the Neo-Malthusians not only as lawful, but as a

duty to themselves and to their children, if they cannot look forward with sufficient certainty to being able to provide for their offspring in their own station in life. The neglect of this supposed duty they denounce as a crime. The following passage in an article by Mr. Ernest Bowden is a good example of Neo-Malthusian sentiments :

"When a parent who might decently rear a small family, calmly ignores the claims of his existing offspring, and so increases his family that, as often happens, one of his earlier children simply dies of poverty, how can he be logically acquitted of the barbarous manslaughter of his own child? . . . Surely the more our heart is touched by the wail of distress from our fellow-creatures, the more keenly must we feel the downright wickedness of bringing a fresh human being into the world, if he have not at least a reasonable chance of leading a good and happy life."

Now let us suppose that this kind of teaching were to prevail, and consider what its consequences would be. It appeals to the educated class most of all, to those who are provident and who have a care for the future, to those who are capable of self-control, and have a keen sense of their duties to posterity. Such men will be the few and not the many. They will be men who have achieved for themselves and their families some sort of position, or who inherit resources which they feel bound to hand on in their integrity to their children. They will be (I am speaking from a Neo-Malthusian standpoint) the prudent, the temperate, the self-relying, the self-restrained. These will be the men who will have very small families and who will make it their object to prevent too rapid an increase of their race, as far as it lies in their power. And who, on the other hand, will be the class who in the halcyon days when Neo-Malthusianism is preached in public will be the reckless offenders against its teaching? They will be those who are too careless and degraded to follow its precepts. They will be the vicious, the intemperate, those whose animal instincts are too strong to be subject to considerations of prudence. Will the drunkard take the advice of this new school? Will those who are sunk in abject poverty, who are degraded and indifferent to all considerations, save the inclinations of the moment, pay any heed to these new teachers? The Neo-Malthusian doctrines will simply fall on deaf ears, and will have no practical effect whatever.

What will follow, then, from the wider spread of this teaching, and from the conversion to it of all prudent and thoughtful

men? Why, simply this, that the higher type of the race will gradually die out, and the lower type will increase and mutiply all the more rapidly, by reason of the comparative fewness of those who otherwise would by reason of their superior nature form a powerful middle class, into which the lower type would make their way only in exceptional cases. The strength of a nation is not so much in its upper class, at least in the present day, as in an intelligent, energetic, honest, sober, industrious middle class. It is this which constitutes the strength of America, England, France, and Germany. The comparative absence of it is the weakness of Southern Europe, and also of South America. Anything that tends to increase the proletariat and to diminish the middle class, is a distinct injury to a nation. Anything that exalts this class into a less numerous but more wealthy upper-middle or upper class, is a distinct loss of strength and vigor. This would be especially the case when the very process of diminution involved the exercise of continual prudence and self-restraint, and the adoption of means which would only be attractive to those who were sufficiently endowed with the bump of caution to take measures against an evil which is always doubtful and generally far away.

Now this would be the infallible consequence of the prevalence of Neo-Malthusian doctrines. However widely spread, they would never be adopted into the daily life of the very class whom it is most important to diminish. The utterly careless and improvident, the intemperate, the reckless would increase as before; while the respectable and the far-seeing, the men who desired to make for themselves a good position, and to leave to their children a suitable provision would be those who would be anxious that their children should not be sufficiently numerous to hinder either their own comfort, or the future welfare of their offspring. Thus, if we suppose two families, one of which is limited by the parents to three children, while the other in the absence of any such limit has twice that number—if, moreover, the same rate of increase for similar reasons is maintained for six generations—the respective numbers, when the sixth generation is reached will be 729 on the one hand, and 46,656 on the other. If we suppose one-half of the more prolific race to have perished, on account of the greater rate of mortality in comparison with their more favored rivals, it would still leave the inferior type in

a majority of 30 to 1. In this way Neo-Malthusian doctrines are of a most retrograde character. So far from tending to the welfare of the human race, they tend to a steady deterioration of it. They would, in the natural course of things, bring us back to a class of plutocrats on the one hand, few in numbers, but possessed of superior natures and plenteous wealth, and on the other a continually augmenting class of the poor and the degraded with all the dangerous elements that follow from this class being sufficiently numerous to swamp those who belong to the nobler race.

This is not the only danger with which we are threatened if the doctrines of the Neo-Malthusians are to be generally accepted. They start with a denial of the binding character of what is termed the natural law, and say that the code which bears this name is but the result of a long series of generalizations from experience, which have for their object to discover what tends to promote the happiness and what the misery of the human race. In early days, they say, the rapid increase of the human race tended to the general happiness, and, therefore, what is called the natural law approved the procreation of a large family. Now, however, it is just the opposite. The rapid increase of the human family is most injurious to the general happiness, and, therefore, we assert that it is equally true that the natural law forbids it as that it once encouraged it. The natural law thus loses its absolute character and varies with varying circumstances. If this is to be granted, we must carry on the argument a little farther. In former times the natural law forbade the parent to destroy any of his children. There was plenty of room for all, and the selfishness of those who exposed, or took away the life of, the children they did not care to support was calculated to injure the common interests of the race. But now all this is changed. The curtailment of the family is (say the Neo-Malthusians) most desirable. Why, then, should the parent who has children whom he cannot bring up as he ought, be compelled to burden himself with them? Why should not he be allowed to dispose of those whom he has called into existence? Is it any kindness to bring them up with the almost certain prospect of misery and destitution before them? If man has a right over the laws of life, in that he can, by artificial means, prevent the accomplishment of what the law of nature declares to be the primary end of his own action, why should he not exert a similar sway over the life of

which he regards himself as the author? The danger of too wholesale an employment of this latter right is safeguarded against by the strong instinct of parental affection. But where this affection would display itself in the merciful cutting short of a life which threatens to be one of suffering and destitution, why punish the parent, if he refuses to prolong the life that can hardly fail to be doomed to a life-long misery? Take, for example, the case of a posthumous child born to some poor widow. She is herself starving. Already she has several little ones crying to her for bread and she has none to give them. Her new-born infant is puny and sickly and suffering. What is its prospect of a happy life? Why may she not add one drop more to the soothing draught she is giving it, and so induce, gently and without a pang, a peaceful sleep from which there shall be no awaking? If once we admit any exception to that absolute law within, which we call the natural law, surely such a case as this is one which justifies, and even renders praiseworthy, the action of the mother, who, out of love for her little one, forbids it to persevere in so unpromising an existence.

In other words, the consequence of Neo-Malthusian doctrines would be gradually to abolish the sanctity of human life, and to condone or rather to sanction and approve deliberate murder. Utilitarianism cuts at the root of every law of which we cannot perceive, with our dim and short sighted vision, the practical value. Once refuse to acknowledge as immutable and eternal the sanctions of nature's laws, and we shall soon find ourselves involved in a downward path leading to the dark abysses of pagan morality and pagan crime. Once turn away from the natural light that enlightens every man that comes into the world, and we soon find ourselves involved in the thick darkness that covered the earth when the code of heathen civilization had taken the place of the laws of God.

There is still another consequence that would follow from the course of conduct advocated by the new school. Around the purity of women God has placed certain safeguards. The consciousness of the disgrace that is likely to accompany any serious violation of the law of purity aids not a little to create even among those who are careless of the mere offense against God, a strong traditional instinct in favor of virtue. The knowledge of the consequences that may ensue, has, in point of fact, saved

thousands from falling who otherwise would have fallen. The motive, it is true, was not a very exalted one, but it has often proved effectual where all higher motives failed. But—what is perhaps still more important—it has aided not a little in the formation of a potent and very healthy public opinion on the importance of maidenly integrity. The great difference that generally prevails between the appreciation of the value of purity to boys and girls, is a curious proof of this. There is no real distinction between the sin committed in the one case and the other; yet the world regards the indulgence of the passions as little more than a youthful foible in the young man, while in a young woman it is looked upon as an indelible disgrace.

Now, if this potent motive were to disappear, if sin could be committed without the immediate punishment which under present circumstances is liable to follow on it, if the terrible consequence of a fall were not present to the eyes of those whose frailty is at present only too prone to yield, and whose fear of God and hatred of sin is, alas! not sufficient to keep them to the paths of virtue, should we not have reason to fear a terrible increase of sexual license, and a gradual disappearance of that dread of sin which is to a great extent a healthy outcome of the fear of its consequences? We fear that already the poison of these new doctrines is spreading among the middle class both in Europe and America, and side by side with their wider circulation there is a continually diminishing love of purity, and a cynical depreciation of that jewel of innocence which even the heathen world regarded as a priceless treasure.

The conclusions then to which we find ourselves compelled to arrive are these:

1. The Neo-Malthusian doctrines would tend to produce the very evils that they are supposed to prevent, viz.: The growth of a large proletariat on the one side and the development side by side with it, of a small, but wealthy class of capitalists, continually diminishing in numbers as compared with the ignorant and undisciplined mass around them, but increasing rapidly in intelligence and material prosperity. This is a strange ideal for these new teachers to look forward to, but it is one that, according to their own showing, must certainly ensue.

2. There would gradually follow from the disregard and violation of what we call the natural law, other consequences, which

were common enough in pagan times, but are now universally condemned even by those who reject the teaching of Christianity, such as the exposure or murder of children whom it was inconvenient to the parents to maintain.

3. There would also go hand in hand with these new doctrines a steady depreciation of the importance of feminine purity, and a growing indulgence of the lower instincts, recklessly and without any fear of future consequences such as now prevails. These dangers are moreover to be incurred in order to meet an evil which is (speaking generally) not the result of overpopulation at all, but of other causes, of which the most fertile are drunkenness and laziness.

We cannot help suspecting, if the truth were known, that Neo-Malthusianism is but an excuse for selfishness after all. The pleasures of parentage are chiefly confined to the first two or three children. As life goes on the little stranger who makes its appearance from time to time is rather a burden than a delight to father and mother alike. All the fine talk of the duty we owe to our unborn children, or to children who ought to be unborn, is but a well disguised expression of a desire to be rid, as far as circumstances allow, of the hardships and self-sacrifice that a large family is wont to bring with it. If, by some impossible arrangement, a man himself were to be comfortably off in exact proportion to the number of his children, we should not hear much more of the duty that he owes to them, or the wickedness of bringing into existence those whose after lives may prove a burden to them.

I have argued this question on its own merits, quite apart from the claims of the natural law, or from any consideration of the fear of God. But I cannot conclude without reminding my readers that the practices advocated by the Neo-Malthusians are most serious offences against Nature and Nature's God. In the eyes of men those who are guilty of them may pass for honorable and virtuous citizens, but in the eyes of Him who sees in secret, the poor wanderer in the streets is far less culpable than those who thus set at naught, for the sake of their own comfort and enjoyment, the laws that God has laid down to regulate the increase of the human kind.

R. F. CLARKE, S. J.